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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the values of society as reflected by the education system is considered with particular emphasis upon the difficulty faced by educators when social values are confused and ambiguous. It is pointed out that the primary task for schools is to produce literate citizens, able to read, write, manipulate symbols, and develop independent means of making judgments and determining actions. When schools are asked to assume the responsibility for inculcating values they face difficulties because the general public is uncertain of what constitutes sound moral and ethical principles. The importance of educational research in helping schools attain the goals expected of them is noted. (JD)

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LUNCHEON REMARKS

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MEETING OF SPECIAL TASK FORCES OF THE

NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 26, 1978
STOUFFERS NATIONAL CENTER HOTEL
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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SP 013 702

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE HERE TODAY. WHEN TOM SHANNON ASKED ME TO SPEAK I COULD HARDLY REFUSE. WHEN MY ASSISTANT BROUGHT HIS LETTER OF INVITATION TO ME, HE SAID "OH, TOM SHANNON" ISN'T HE ONE OF YOUR FELLOW TRAVELERS." LITTLE DID HE KNOW THAT TOM AND MARGARET BUVINGER AND I ARE ALL THREE FELLOW TRAVELERS, HAVING SPENT A FASCINATING TRIP TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA TOGETHER IN, I MIGHT ADD, THE COMPANY OF A NUMBER OF DISTINGUISHED EDUCATORS.

MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT YOU ARE MEETING NOW AS MEMBERS OF TASK FORCES DISCUSSING TIMELY AND IMPORTANT ISSUES IN EDUCATION INCLUDING "IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING," "MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTING," "THE FUTURE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING" AND, "COPING WITH ENERGY COSTS."

THE ARRAY OF ISSUES AND QUESTIONS WHICH YOU AS SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS MUST FACE IS, OF COURSE, ENORMOUS. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE INDEED GREAT.

I BELIEVE THAT YOU AS A GROUP, PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER PART OF THE EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE, MUST DEAL WITH WHAT I CONSIDER TO BE TWO FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS IN EDUCATION.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SCHOOLS TO DO?

AND

HOW CAN THE SCHOOLS DO WHAT WE WANT?

THESE QUESTIONS, AS YOU WELL KNOW, ARE NOT EASY. AS WE ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS OF WHAT WE WANT OUR SCHOOLS TO DO, WE ARE INITIALLY FACED WITH THE QUESTION OF WHO "WE" IS. IN THE UNITED STATES, ONE THING IS CERTAIN: "WE" ARE THE CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY. "WE" MAKE MANY OF THESE DECISIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, THOUGH NOT AS MANY AS FORMERLY. THAT IS THE DISTINCTIVE AMERICAN WAY: LAY AND LOCAL CONTROL. OUR SYSTEM OF LOCAL CONTROL IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AND HAS SERVED US LONG AND WELL. I AM NOT SO NAIVE AS TO IGNORE THE INFLUENCE AND FUNDS THAT COME FROM FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS, BUT I AM IMPRESSED BY THE RESPONSIVENESS - STILL- OF THE SCHOOLS TO THE VALUES EXPRESSED BY THEIR LAY AND LOCAL LEADERS. THE RECENT "BACK TO BASICS" MOVEMENT DID NOT ORIGINATE WITH FEDERAL EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS, RATHER WITH LOCAL LAY PERSONS.

THROUGH THIS SYSTEM OF LAY, LOCAL CONTROL THAT THE NSBA EMBODIES,WE GO ABOUT THE BUSINESS OF DETERMINING WHAT "WE WANT" FROM OUR SCHOOLS. PERHAPS THIS QUESTION MORE THAN ANY OTHER PERPLEXED ME AS I TRAVELED WITH TOM AND MARGARET IN CHINA.

IN CHINA THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOLS AND THEIR SOCIETY?" WAS EVER PRESENT. THIS QUESTION IS, OF COURSE, CENTRAL TO THE DETERMINATION OF WHAT "WE WANT" OUR SCHOOLS TO DO. IT IS VITAL IN ANY SCHOOL SYSTEM ANYWHERE. TO WHAT EXTENT

DOES THE SCHOOL SYSTEM FIND ITSELF REFLECTING THE VALUES OF THE SOCIETY, EMPHASIZING SOME MORE THAN OTHER, OR AS GEORGE COUNTS ASKED DURING THE DEPRESSION IN 1933 WHEN CONCERN ABOUT THE VITALITY OF THE SOCIETY WAS GREAT, DO THE SCHOOLS LEAD IN BUILDING A NEW SOCIAL ORDER? GENERALLY THE SCHOOLS HAVE DONE MUCH BETTER FOLLOWING THE CANONS OF THE SOCIETY THAN THEY HAVE IN LEADING IN THE CREATION OF SUCH CANONS.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VALUES OF THE SOCIETY AND THOSE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS COMPLEX, OF COURSE, A COMPLEXITY WHICH IS REDUCED, HOWEVER, WHEN THERE IS CLEAR AGREEMENT ON WHAT THE VALUES OF THE SOCIETY ARE. THEN, AT LEAST, THE SCHOOLS KNOW THEIR TASK AND CAN CONCENTRATE ON HOW TO ACHIEVE IT. WHEN THERE IS AMBIGUITY ABOUT THE VALUES, OR WORSE, CONTRADICTORY VALUES EXTANT IN SUBSTANTIAL MEASURE IN THE SOCIETY, THEN THE TASK OF THE SCHOOLS IS DIFFICULT INDEED.

IN CHINA AT THE MOMENT THERE IS BOTH AMBIGUITY AND CONTRADICTION IN THE GOALS OF THE SOCIETY, AMBIGUITY ABOUT THE EXTENT OF THE SHIFT FROM THE DOMINANCE OF "REDNESS" (THE OVERALL NEED OF THE SOCIETY TO INSTILL LOYALTY TO THE PROLETARIAN, REVOLUTIONARY IDEAL) TO THAT OF "EXPERT" (THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE SOCIETY DEVELOP HUMAN RESOURCES THAT CAN ASSIST CHINA BECOME A LEADING INDUSTRIALIZED NATION). FUNDAMENTALLY, THE PROBLEM IS WELL EXEMPLIFIED IN THE QUESTION OF HOW CHINESE SOCIETY CAN DEVELOP ITS SCIENTIFIC AND

TECHNOLOGICAL TALENT WHILE MAINTAINING ITS COMMITMENTS TO THE PRINCIPLES OF ITS SOCIALISM AND ITS REVOLUTION AND TO THE COLLECTIVE WELFARE OF ITS PEOPLE. THESE TENETS HOLD THAT IF ALL CHINESE ARE TO SHARE THE BENEFITS OF THE SOCIETY, THEN ALL MUST CONTRIBUTE TO THEM. THE ASSUMPTION HAS BEEN LOOSELY MADE IN CHINA THAT CONTRIBUTIONS SHOULD NOT BE EITHER BROADLY DIFFERENTIATED OR COMPENSATED. THUS, MANUAL LABOR HAS BEEN EXPECTED OF ALL, AND ELITISM OF THE SORT OCCASIONALLY FOUND IN INTELLECTUALS AND UNIVERSITIES WIDELY DISCOURAGED.

RECENTLY THE EMPHASIS IN CHINA HAS CHANGED; THE NEW POLICY RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING AND NUTURING SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL TALENT SO AS TO HELP CHINA MODERNIZE AND ASSUME A MAJOR ROLE AS A LEADING INDUSTRIAL NATION. ONCE THE POLICY FOR THE SOCIETY SHIFTS, THE ISSUE BECOMES: HOW DO THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS CHANGE THEIR ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THIS MODIFICATION IN SOCIAL POLICY? THAT IS THE QUESTION CHINA IS FACING TODAY.

WHY THIS DISCUSSION ABOUT CHINA? FIRST, BECAUSE IT IS ON MY MIND AND STILL A VIVID EXPERIENCE FOR ME. BUT, MORE IMPORTANT, I BELIEVE THAT THE SHARPNESS OF THE CHINESE EXAMPLE OF A SHIFTING SOCIAL POLICY REQUIRING MODIFICATION IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IS ILLUSTRATIVE FOR AMERICA.

CERTAINLY BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO SAY IS THAT OUR TWO SOCIETIES ARE VASTLY DIFFERENT - ONE, CHINESE, PRIZES THE COLLECTIVE, WHILE WE IN THE US VALUE INDIVIDUALISM.

THE SIMILARITY, HOWEVER, IS THAT BOTH SOCIETIES EXPECT THEIR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS TO TRANSMIT AND TO AFFIRM THE VALUES THE SOCIETY HOLDS DEAR. WHEN THERE IS WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE OF GOALS IN THE SOCIETY, THEN IT IS EASIER FOR THE SCHOOL SYSTEM TO MAKE THE TRANSMISSION EFFECTIVE. WHEN THERE IS DISAGREEMENT, THE PROBLEM BECOMES MORE COMPLEX. WHEN THE VALUES OF THE SOCIETY ARE CHANGING, THEN THE TASK OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IS COMPLICATED INDEED. THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM MUST IDENTIFY THE NEW VALUES OF THE SOCIETY, AS EXPERIENCED SOMETIMES CONTRADICTORILY BY THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY AND ITS LEADERS. THEN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM MUST FIND WAYS OF REFLECTING THESE NEW VALUES.

I BELIEVE THAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING A PERIOD NOW IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH IS IN MANY WAYS TRANSITIONAL. THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF WHO "WE" ARE IN THE QUESTION "WHAT DO WE WANT FROM OUR SCHOOLS" REMAINS ABOUT THE SAME. LAY CONTROL AND LOCAL CONTROL HAVE NOT IN MY OPINION, BEEN SERIOUSLY ERODED (ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT CHANGES PRINCIPALLY IN SOURCES OF FUNDS AND REGULATIONS DETERMINING THEIR USE.)

HOWEVER, THE ANSWERS WE ARE COMING UP WITH TO THE QUESTION OF WHAT "WE WANT" ARE CHANGING. HISTORICALLY, EDUCATION SIMPLY FOR ITSELF WAS RARELY DESIRED. IT WAS ALWAYS SEEN INSTEAD AS HAVING AN INSTRUMENTAL VALUE, AS BEING A MEANS TO A DESIRED END. THE ASSUMPTION WAS THAT EDUCATION WOULD LEAD TO VALUABLE SOCIAL CONSEQENCES, THAT IT WOULD LEAD TO MORALITY, OR FINANCIAL SUCCESS,

OR BETTER CITIZENSHIP, OR CLEANER TEETH OR BETTER DRIVERS. OF COURSE, OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM CAN SOMETIMES PRODUCE SUCH RESULTS. RECENTLY, HOWEVER, WE ARE EXPERIENCING AN INCREASING DEMAND THAT EDUCATION ATTEND TO THE CAUSE OF INCULCATING LITERACY.

I AM NOT AN ADVOCATE OF BACK TO BASICS IN THE NARROWER DEFINITION OF THAT TERM WHICH WOULD HAVE US ABONDON SO MUCH OF WHAT WE HAVE GAINED IN THE SCHOOLS IN THE PAST TEN TO TWENTY YEARS. BUT I DO THINK THAT LITERACY, BROADLY DEFINED, OUGHT TO BE THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF SCHOOLING. BY "LITERACY" I MEAN THE ABILITY TO READ, WRITE, MANIPULATE SYMBOLS, AND DEVELOP INDEPENDENT MEANS OF MAKING JUDGMENTS AND DETERMINING ACTIONS. UNLESS WE ARE ABLE TO FOCUS THE ENERGIES OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM ON THIS MAIN TASK, WE WILL, I THINK, CONTINUE TO ASK SCHOOLS TO ACCOMPLISH TOO MUCH, BY ASKING THEM TO DO TOO MUCH, THEY WILL BE UNABLE TO ACCOMPLISH EVEN MINIMIAL GOALS.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE MODULATE OUR DEMANDS ON THE SCHOOLS SO THAT WE DO NOT, IN EFFECT, OVERLOAD THE CIRCUITS. IF OUR DEMANDS ARE MODERATE, WE WILL ACHIEVE MUCH MORE.

THE "WE WANT" PART OF THE QUESTION IDENTIFIES DIRECTLY THE AMBIGUITY WE SOMETIMES FEEL IN OUR SOCIETY ABOUT WHAT COMMON GOALS AND VALUES WE HOLD. UNTIL WE CAN RECONCILE THOSE MATTERS AND ADDRESS THEM WITH GREATER CLARITY THAN WE HAVE AT THE MOMENT, WE WILL BE BESET WITH DIFFICULTIES IN HAVING OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

IN THE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT POSITION OF DEVELOPING AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM CONGRUENT WITH THE UNARTICULATED GOALS OF THE SOCIETY. THAT IS A GUARANTEE FOR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, AND WE ARE SEEING MUCH OF IT. SOME WANT THE SCHOOLS TO SOLVE THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF TEEN AGE YOUTH; NOT LIKELY WHEN THE SCHOOLS DO NOT CONTROL THE ECONOMY; OTHERS WANT THE SCHOOLS TO INCULCATE IN THE YOUNG RIGOROUS WORK HABITS AS IN THE LEGENDS OF THE DICKENSIAN BOOKKEEPER, NOT LIKELY WHEN PERMISSIVENESS REIGNS IN THE SOCIETY; STILL OTHERS WANT THE SCHOOLS TO GIVE THE YOUNG A CLEAR SENSE OF VALUES AND PURPOSE, NOT LIKELY WHEN THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES CANNOT AGREE UPON SUCH COMMITMENTS. THESE QUESTIONS, THE QUESTIONS OF PURPOSE, ARE THE MOST TROUBLING ONES FOR THE SCHOOLS TODAY, BUT THEY ARE NOT FUNDAMENTALLY ONES FOR EDUCATORS TO SOLVE BY THEMSELVES. THEY MUST BE ADDRESSED BY GROUPS LIKE YOURS. THESE ARE THE TRUE "POLICY" QUESTIONS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION.

LET ME NOW MOVE TO THE THIRD PART OF MY INITIAL QUESTION: "WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SCHOOLS TO DO?" HERE THE FOCUS IS UPON THE SCHOOLS. ONE CONTEMPORARY VIEW IS THAT WE OUGHT TO MINIMIZE THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS, AND PERHAPS THAT IS A USEFUL CORRECTIVE TO THE UNCRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS WE FORMERLY MADE ABOUT HOW CENTRALLY SIGNIFICANT THE SCHOOLS WERE IN DETERMINING A YOUNGSTER'S EDUCATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

IN THIS VIEW, THE SCHOOLS ARE SEEN AS PLAYING SECOND STRING TO A HOST OF OTHER AGENCIES IN PREDICTING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT; SOCIAL CLASS, FAMILY INCOME, PARENTAL EDUCATION, RACE,

SEX, EVEN NATIVE INTELLIGENCE. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THOSE FACTORS SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCE WHAT A STUDENT ACHIEVES IN SCHOOL.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE SCHOOLS ARE NOT THE ONLY AGENCY THAT EDUCATES IN THE SOCIETY. WE ARE PROPERLY REMINDED OF THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF THE FAMILY, COMMUNITY, TELEVISION, MUSEUM, CHURCH ETC. LAWRENCE CREMIN REFERS TO THIS AS THE "CONFIGURATION OF EDUCATION." THAT IS A HELPFUL WAY TO CONCEIVE OF HOW EDUCATION OCCURS IN OUR SOCIETY. THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF THESE AGENCIES, THOUGH IS NOT EDUCATIVE, HOWEVER SIGNIFICANT THE EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTIVITIES MAY BE. FAMILIES EXIST TO NURTURE AND TO LOVE, AS WELL AS TO TEACH; TELEVISION EXISTS PRINCIPALLY TO MAKE MONEY AND TO ENTERTAIN; CHURCHES EXIST TO SAVE SOULS; MUSEUMS TO BEGUILE AND PRESERVE. EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES FLOW FROM EACH, THOUGH THESE CONSEQUENCES MAY BE NEITHER PRIMARY NOR PURPOSIVE. SCHOOLS REMAIN THE ONLY INSTITUTIONS WITH THE PRIMARY OBLIGATION TO EXPRESS EXPLICITLY THE EDUCATIONAL NORMS AND GOALS OF THE SOCIETY.

THE ISSUE REMAINS: HOW DO WE DETERMINE AS A SOCIETY WHAT OUR NORMS AND GOALS ARE? MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE QUESTION WHICH I ASK IN MY ROLE AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION IS: IS THIS A RESEARCHABLE QUESTION? MY ANSWER IS: BARELY. WHILE IT IS APPROPRIATE AND VITAL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH TO ADDRESS THE UNIVERSE OF QUESTIONS AROUND THE ISSUE, IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY

THAT EITHER FEDERALLY SUPPORTED RESEARCHERS OR INDEPENDENT ACADEMICS ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS DEFINITIVELY. THESE ARE QUESTIONS FOR THOSE WHO MAKE POLICY FOR THE SCHOOLS. SINCE IN THIS COUNTRY WE, UNLIKE MOST OTHER NATIONS, HAVE GIVEN PRIMACY TO LOCAL AND LAY CONTROL, RESEARCHERS CAN (AND, I BELIEVE, SHOULD) SERVE THESE LOCAL AND LAY GROUPS. I DO NOT BELIEVE, EMPHATICALLY DO NOT BELIEVE, THAT THE FINDINGS OF RESEARCH SHOULD BE IGNORED OR THAT POLICY SHOULD BE MADE IN A VACUUM FROM WHICH RESEARCH IS EXCLUDED. RESEARCHERS CAN PROVIDE SOME INFORMATION, "DATA" IN THE LANGUAGE OF RESEARCHERS, THAT MAY BE USEFUL TO THOSE DETERMINING POLICY. RESEARCHERS MAY EVEN BE ABLE TO HELP SUCH GROUPS FRAME THE QUESTION TO WHICH ANSWERS ARE SOUGHT. AS MICHAEL POLYANI WROTE, "THE WORST, THE MOST CORRUPTING OF LIES, ARE PROBLEMS POORLY STATED." IN BOTH INSTANCES RESEARCH IS AT THE SERVICE OF THE POLICY MAKERS. IN MY VIEW THAT IS ENTIRELY APPROPRIATE.

RESOLUTION OF THAT FIRST QUESTION, "WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SCHOOLS TO DO? RESTS THEN PRIMARILY WITH THE SOCIETY ITSELF. WHAT THOSE IN CHARGE OF LOCAL POLICY DECISIONS OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO EXPECT FROM RESEARCHERS IS ASSISTANCE, BUT THEY SHOULD NOT EXPECT (NOR WANT) RESEARCH TO GIVE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION.

ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL DILEMMAS FOR EDUCATORS DURING THE RECENT DECADES HAS BEEN THE ABSENCE OF CONSENSUS ABOUT PURPOSE. THE SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN ASKED TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR A VARIETY OF

ACTIVITIES FORMERLY CARRIED OUT BY OTHER AGENCIES. AS WE CAME TO RELY MORE AND MORE ON THE SCHOOLS TO SOLVE EVERY CONCEIVABLE KIND OF PROBLEM, WE BEGAN IN EFFECT TO USE THE SCHOOLS TO ESCAPE OUR OWN RESPONSIBILITIES TO COMMUNICATE OUR VALUES TO OUR CHILDREN.

IT IS ARGUABLE THAT A PREVALENT ATTITUDE IN MUCH OF THE LAST FIFTY YEARS HAS BEEN THE RELUCTANCE OF ADULT SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO IMPOSE PUBLICLY THEIR VIEW OF THE WORLD ON THE YOUNG. IN PART, THIS HAS BEEN TRUE BECAUSE ADULT SOCIETY HAS BEEN UNSURE OF THE VALUES IT WISHED TO IMPART. WHEN THIS HAPPENS, THERE IS GREAT PRESSURE ON THE SCHOOLS TO SEND MESSAGES AND INCULCATE VALUES PREVIOUSLY HANDLED AT HOME. IN SHORT, FOR THE SCHOOLS TO MAKE SOCIAL POLICY RATHER THAN TO REFLECT IT.

ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS PHENOMENON IS SEX EDUCATION. AS PARENTS IN THE 1960'S BECAME INCREASINGLY UNSURE OF WHAT THEIR SEXUAL STANDARDS OUGHT TO BE, PRESSURE BUILT ON THE SCHOOLS TO INSTRUCT CHILDREN IN MATTERS REGARDING SEX. INEVITABLY, AND I THINK PROPERLY, WHEN THE SCHOOLS ARE HANDED SUCH A VALUE-LADEN ISSUE WITH NO PARTICULAR AGREEMENT IN THE SOCIETY ABOUT HOW TO HANDLE IT, THE SCHOOLS TAKE A POSITION OF NEUTRALITY. UNDER PRESSURE TO "DO SOMETHING ABOUT" SEX EDUCATION, AND RECEIVING NO CLEAR SET OF STANDARDS, THE SCHOOLS TURNED COMPLICATED AND DIFFICULT MORAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS SURROUNDING HUMAN SEXUALITY INTO SIMPLE SCHEMATIC DIAGRAMS. IN FACT, OUR CHILDREN ARE GENERALLY CONSIDERABLY MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE PHYSIOLOGY OF HUMAN REPRODUCTION THAN WE WERE

AT THEIR AGE. BUT, IF THE TRUTH BE KNOWN, OUR CHILDREN HAVE OFTEN BEEN LESS AWARE OF THE DIFFICULT VALUE LADEN ISSUES INVOLVED. GIVEN THE ENTHUSIASM AND RESPECT FOR SPECIALIZATION, PROFESSIONALISM, AND SCIENTISM IN THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY, THERE WAS EVEN MORE PRESSURE TO ALLOW ADULT SOCIETY TO IGNORE VALUE QUESTIONS AND RETREAT BEHIND THE BANNER OF PROFESSIONAL SPECIALIZATION AND SCIENCE. BETTER THAT A TEACHER WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE IN BIOLOGY OR SCIENCE EDUCATION INSTRUCT A CHILD ABOUT SEX, MINIMIZING THE VALUE ISSUES, THAN A PARENT ABSENT WITHOUT THE SHROUD OF PROFESSIONALISM FULFILL HIS OR HER OBLIGATION.

PARENTS WERE FREQUENTLY RIGHT THAT THEIR CHILDREN LEARNED MORE BIOLOGY THAN THEIR PARENTS HAD. AND, THERE IS IN MY VIEW NO COMPELLING EVIDENCE THAT SUCH FORMAL BIOLOGICAL INSTRUCTION IN SEX EDUCATION - OR HYGIENE, AS IT WAS ONCE KNOWN - OR HUMAN REPRODUCTION, AS IT MORE RECENTLY HAS BEEN KNOWN - HAS IN AND OF ITSELF LED TO INCREASED SEXUAL ACTIVITY AMONG THE PERSONS WHO HAVE RECEIVED SUCH INSTRUCTION. THAT, OF COURSE, HAS BEEN THE CHIEF CRITICISM OF SEX EDUCATION, BUT THAT IS NOT MY POINT. WHAT HAS HAPPENED IS THAT A SUBJECT WHICH HAS A COMPELLING SCIENTIFIC DIMENSION AND EQUALLY IF NOT MORE COMPELLING ETHICAL AND EMOTIONAL DIMENSIONS HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE SCHOOLS WITH THE TACIT UNDERSTANDING THAT THE SCHOOLS SHOULD INSTRUCT IN THE "VALUE FREE" SCIENTIFIC PART OF THE SUBJECT WHILE THE MURKIER "VALUE LADEN" DIMENSIONS SHOULD BE IGNORED LARGELY BECAUSE THERE IS ABSENCE OF CONSENSUS ABOUT THEM. SUCH LACK OF CONSENSUS IS WHAT SENT THE SUBJECT TO THE SCHOOLS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

WHAT I AM ARGUING HERE IS THAT THE SCHOOLS NEED CLEAR SIGNALS FROM THE SOCIETY AT LARGE ABOUT WHAT THEIR ROLE OUGHT TO BE. IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH CLEAR SIGNALS, THE SCHOOLS ARE APT TO FLOUNDER AND UNDERGO SEVERE CRITICISM.

SUCH CONSENSUS COMES - NOT FROM FORMAL SCIENTIFIC EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CARRIED ON BY PhD'S IN UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER SCHOLARLY CENTERS, BUT THROUGH THE POLITICAL PROCESS AT ITS BEST, THROUGH CITIZENS INFORMING THEMSELVES ABOUT THE ISSUES AND REACHING CONCLUSIONS ON WHICH THEY WILL STAND. EDUCATORS AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS IN PARTICULAR HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN THIS PROCESS, ONE IN WHICH MANY HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PAST, PREFERRING TO ADDRESS EACH OTHER RATHER THAN THE LARGER SOCIETY THAT STILL DETERMINES THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE SCHOOLS MUST FUNCTION.

EDUCATORS HAVE OFTEN PREFERRED TO COMPLAIN TO EACH OTHER THAT THEY WERE BEING ASKED TO DO TOO MUCH OR TASKS FOR WHICH THEY WERE ILL-EQUIPPED TO PERFORM. RARELY DID SCHOOL PEOPLE SAY TO THE COMMUNITY, "DON'T ASK US TO TAKE ON THESE RESPONSIBILITIES THAT ARE BASICALLY YOURS. LET US CONCENTRATE ON OUR SPECIALTY: TEACHING READING, WRITING, MATHEMATICS, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND SCIENCES.

THE SECOND QUESTION WITH WHICH I BEGAN THIS TALK IS LESS COMPLICATED BOTH CONCEPTUALLY AND POLITICALLY THAN THE FORMER BUT COMPLICATED ENOUGH TO TEST THE METTLE OF SOME OF THE FINEST MINDS IN EDUCATION TODAY. THE FIRST, YOU RECALL, WAS "WHAT DO WE WANT FROM SCHOOLS?" THAT IS A QUESTION FOR THE PUBLIC, FOR ALL OF

US, TO CONSIDER. THE SECOND QUESTION, THOUGH VERY DIFFICULT, IS ADDRESSED TO A SMALLER GROUP, EDUCATORS. IT IS, "HOW CAN THE SCHOOLS DO WHAT WE WANT?" HERE THE PUBLIC HAS THE RIGHT TO CLEAR ANSWERS FROM ITS EDUCATORS ABOUT HOW THE SCHOOLS CAN ACCOMPLISH THE ACTIVITIES DESIRED OF IT. THE QUESTIONS MUST BE ADDRESSED IN SEQUENCE; THE FIRST PRECEDES THE SECOND AND MUST BE ANSWERED FIRST. THAT IS WHY I HAVE GIVEN IT SO MUCH ATTENTION THIS AFTERNOON. IN THE ABSENCE OF AN ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION, IT IS RATHER DIFFICULT TO ANSWER THE SECOND.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, HOWEVER, IS QUITE DIFFERENT IN THESE TWO QUESTIONS. AS I HAVE SAID, IN THE FORMER QUESTION, THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IS SUBSIDIARY, NOT PRIMARY. IN THE SECOND, HOWEVER, EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH OUGHT TO BE PRIMARY. SUCH HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE. TOO OFTEN WE HAVE BEEN MORE CONCERNED WITH PROBLEMS OF SCIENTIFIC OR SCHOLARLY RESEARCH DESIGN OF OUR ANALYSES THAN WE HAVE WITH THE REAL LIFE VALUE OF RESEARCH IN HELPING TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ASSIST CHILDREN TO LEARN MORE EFFECTIVELY. MOST RESEARCH DESIGNS REQUIRE A VERY LIMITED NUMBER OF VARIABLES TO BE ANALYZED WHILE HOLDING ALL OTHERS CONSTANT. WE HAVE SOUGHT IN VAIN THE SINGLE PREDICTIVE VARIABLE IN EDUCATION. IT IS ELUSIVE AND WILL REMAIN SO. I DOUBT THAT A SINGLE, VITAL VARIABLE, SUCH AS CLASS SIZE, TEACHER STYLE, OR READING METHOD EXISTS THAT WILL ACCOUNT BY ITSELF FOR SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS. MOST OF US KNOW THIS BY COMMON SENSE. BUT THE CANONS WHICH WE FOLLOW IN OUR RESEARCH LIFE DO NOT KNOW THIS,

LARGELY BECAUSE THESE CANONS COME TO US FROM THE LABORATORY SCIENCES WHERE ONE CAN CHANGE ONLY ONE VARIABLE AND HOLD THE OTHERS CONSTANT AND SEE DIFFERENCES. SUCH IS NOT THE CASE IN AS COMPLICATED A HUMAN ACTIVITY AS EDUCATION. THEREFORE, RESEARCH OF THIS SINGLE VARIABLE TYPE HAS NOT OFTEN BEEN USEFUL TO EDUCATIONAL PRACTITIONERS AND POLICY MAKERS. NATHAN L. GAGE HAS MADE THIS POINT WITH PERSUASIVE CLARITY IN HIS RECENT BOOK, THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF THE ART OF TEACHING.

AS EDUCATORS, THEN, WE NEED TO ADDRESS OURSELVES TO THE ISSUES THAT ARE AMENABLE TO OUR TALENTS, THAT ARE WITHIN THE LIMITATIONS OF THE SCHOOLS' ROLE IN THE SOCIETY. IF OUR GOALS ARE PRINCIPALLY TO MAKE OUR STUDENTS LITERATE IN THE BROAD SENSE I HAVE OUTLINED, HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE THIS? WHAT IMPLICATIONS DOES THIS HAVE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH? AT NIE OUR ANSWER CAN BEST BE SUMMARIZED IN THE TWO OVERARCHING GOALS WHICH REFLECT OUR MANDATE FROM THE CONGRESS, FROM OUR POLICY COUNCIL, AND FROM THE FIELD. OUR BROAD CONCERNS ARE TO FOSTER RESEARCH WHICH WILL HELP TO DIMINISH THE PREDICTIVE VALUE OF RACE, SOCIAL CLASS, AND SEX ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT. THESE ARE OUR EQUITY CONCERNS. IN ADDITION WE TAKE AS OUR OTHER FUNDAMENTAL GOAL, THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. IN ORDER TO ATTAIN THESE GOALS, WE ARE COMMITTED TO FIND NEW EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH PATTERNS WHICH COME FROM THE FIELD AND WHICH AVOID THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH WE HAVE FREQUENTLY FACED IN THE PAST WHEN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FOLLOWED TOO CLOSELY THE LABORATORY RULES OF RESEARCH.

LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE.

OUR GROUP FOR DISSEMINATION AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF PRACTICE, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT PART OF OUR WORK WHICH SEEKS TO HELP MATCH PRACTICE WITH RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE, IS BEGINNING A NEW PROJECT WHICH I THINK SHOWS GENUINE PROMISE. INSTEAD OF PURSUING THE USUAL PRACTICE BY WHICH WE ASK "WHAT HAVE RESEARCHERS DISCOVERED?" AND THEN "WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE DISCOVERIES FOR PRACTICE?" THE NEW RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INTERPRETATION SERVICE WILL REVERSE THE USUAL PROCEDURE. IT BEGINS BY ASKING TEACHERS, BOARD MEMBERS, SUPERVISORS, AND ADMINISTRATORS TO REPORT QUESTIONS THEY WANT ANSWERED. THESE QUESTIONS ARE THEN PRESENTED TO MEMBERS OF THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY SELECTED FOR THEIR SENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF THE FIELD. THE RDIS CAREFULLY REVIEWS AVAILABLE RESEARCH AND PRODUCES AN INTERPRETIVE REPORT, NOT JUST A SUMMARY, DESIGNED TO GIVE A FOCUSED AND USEFUL ANSWER TO PRACTITIONER QUESTIONS. WE HOPE THAT THROUGH THIS PROGRAM WE CAN NOT ONLY HELP IMPROVE PRACTICE AND BE OF USE TO PRACTITIONERS, BUT THAT WE CAN HELP GUIDE RESEARCHERS TO ISSUES AND QUESTIONS WHICH ARE OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE TO THE FIELD.

YOUR SESSION HERE TODAY, DEMONSTRATES HOW DIFFICULT THE TASK OF MATCHING RESEARCH TO APPROPRIATE PROBLEMS IS. FROM "COPING WITH ENERGY COSTS" TO "IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING" ENCOMPASSES AN EXTRAORDINARILY WIDE RANGE OF DEMANDS FOR THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY. IN ADDITION, WE MUST CONTINUE TO BE AWARE THAT SOME OF OUR EFFORTS SHOULD TAKE THE FORM OF BASIC RESEARCH WHICH MAY NOT AT FIRST SEEM TO BE VERY HELPFUL, BUT WHICH, WILL HAVE PRACTICAL IMPACT AT A MUCH LATER STAGE.

MY PRIMARY MESSAGE TODAY IS FIRST THAT RESEARCHERS MUST BE AWARE OF THE VERY LIMITED DEGREE TO WHICH THEY CAN ADDRESS THE QUESTION: WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SCHOOLS TO DO? RESEARCHERS MUST BE MUCH MORE CONCERNED WITH THE PROBLEMS OF HELPING OUR SCHOOLS ACHIEVE THE GOALS SET FOR THEM. I THINK THAT AS WE FOCUS ON WAYS THAT WE CAN HELP OUR SCHOOLS CARRY OUT THIS MANDATE WE MUST BE AWARE OF HOW DIVERSE AND UNFOCUSSED THAT MANDATE HAS BEEN IN RECENT YEARS, AND HOW NECESSARY IT IS TO BEAR IN MIND THAT THE INCULCATION OF LITERACY IN ITS BROADEST SENSE MUST REMAIN AT THE CENTER OF THE EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE. FINALLY, I HAVE, I HOPE, GIVEN YOU SOME SENSE THAT WE AT NIE ARE COMMITTED TO SHAPING OUR RESEARCH EFFORTS SO THAT THEY CAN BE HELPFUL TO LOCAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE.

THANK YOU